

Hallin and Mancini: Two Decades of Influence in Politics and Communications

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Abstract

Since its publication in 2004, Hallin and Mancini’s model has become a pioneer in understanding the dynamics of media systems in different national contexts. Many studies related to politics that identify the patterns, trends, and variations used by communication systems in different countries and historical moments follow this seminal study to evaluate the formation of public opinion and the quality of democracy. For this article, we obtained 3,455 articles published in Web of Science within the Social Sciences Citation Index using the open-source software Science Mapping Analysis Tool, which we chose as a bibliometric technique for its feasibility in providing a conceptual structure through the spatial representation and disciplinary interrelation with fields like specialization, studies, and authors. By analyzing the co-occurrence of keywords, we drew scientific maps that enable the analysis of their conceptual and social evolution over consecutive periods. The results provide up-to-date information on the state of the model and its relevance in the field of communication and policy today, its strengths, limitations and potential areas of development. The findings identify less studied areas in the field, drawing inspiration from the Mancini model. This opens up a guide for future research by identifying themes and questions through bibliometric analysis.

Keywords

bibliometrics; clustering; network analysis; pluralism; political parallelism; professionalization; scientometrics

1. Introduction

Communication plays a fundamental role in contemporary society, especially in the context of politics and the formation of public opinion. Understanding how media systems interact with the political and social sphere is essential to address critical issues related to democracy, citizen participation, and media influence. In this context, the model developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) has been a fundamental reference in research on media systems and their relationship with politics.

Since its publication, numerous studies have been devoted to identifying patterns, trends, and variations in the use and application of this model in different countries and historical moments. Research around Hallin and Mancini's model has contributed significantly to our understanding of how media systems reflect and shape political and social dynamics.

This study will conduct a comprehensive bibliometric review of academic research related to the Hallin and Mancini model. The Web of Science tool provided a source of 3,455 articles published in the Social Sciences Citation Index category that address this theoretical model in the context of communication and politics. In addition to assessing the current state of research, this study will seek to identify research patterns, conceptual evolution, and areas of research. The strengths and limitations of existing research will also be examined. Bibliometric analysis will provide an up-to-date view of the relevance of Hallin and Mancini's model in the field of communication and policy while offering guidance for future research and standing as a useful tool for bibliometric analysis in this field. We aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the influence of the media on the formation of public opinion and democratic quality in different national contexts. Concerning research objectives, the study proposes the following:

RO1: Conduct a comprehensive bibliometric review of articles published in Web of Science that address the Hallin and Mancini model in the context of communication and policy.

RO2: Identify research patterns, such as more frequent subject areas and less studied areas, in articles related to the Hallin and Mancini model.

RO3: Use the Science Mapping Analysis Tool (SciMAT) to graphically represent the conceptual and social evolution of the Hallin and Mancini model over consecutive periods.

RO4: Assess the strengths and limitations of existing research on the Hallin and Mancini model, including its relevance in the current field of communication and policy.

RO5: Provide guidance for future research by identifying emerging research issues and questions in the context of the Hallin and Mancini model.

This article will be divided into five sections. The introduction and the research objectives are presented first. In the second section, a review of the existing literature on the precursor theories of the Hallin and Mancini model is made to finish analyzing and comparing the influence that media systems develop on public opinion and how politics has been conducted in different policies. In the third section, the methodology used is explained; specifically, the research standards are established as the methods and instruments of data

collection and analysis. In the fourth section, the results are presented and compared with what other authors have written. The fifth section concludes with implications of the study and future lines of research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Precursor Theories

The I World War marks the first use of propaganda in a modern environment that is sensitive to communication. The Committee on Public Information in the US is important for the recognition and acknowledgment of propaganda, both for the success of its work and for providing its means and toolkit. Bernays (1928), author of the book *Propaganda*, is the member who facilitated this committee to put much knowledge into practice. Considered one of the fathers of public relations, he argues that propaganda is a powerful tool for influencing public opinion through media communication and should be linked to the discussion about the role of the media in shaping public opinion in different political systems. Bernays' book was a key document during the early years, along with another essential study, *Propaganda in the World War* (Lasswell, 1927), which discusses the use of propaganda as a strategic tool to mobilize the population and justify US involvement in the war.

Bernays' (1928) work is also linked to much of the work of W. Lippmann, who is also a member of the commission. An influential journalist and political commentator, Lippmann (1923) focussed his work "Public Opinion" on the idea that public opinion is a mediated construct. He suggests that most people rely on the media to form their opinions on political matters.

Siebert et al.'s (1956) "Four Theories of the Press" was developed three decades later and focuses on theories of the press in different political systems, including authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist. It is necessary to bear in mind that these theories were developed in a Cold War context, where different approaches to the media were examined in different political systems. The theories of Siebert et al. (1956) could be considered an initial framework for understanding how media are conceptualized in different political systems.

2.2. Hallin and Mancini's Model

Hallin and Mancini's (2004) book *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* noted that media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and in the way politics is conducted in different countries. The main objective of the book was to analyze and compare media systems in different countries of the Western world, focusing on three main models:

1. The liberal model, which is characterized by a high degree of press freedom and private ownership of the media, and typically associated with countries such as the US and other Western countries.
2. The corporate democratic model, which is based on cooperation between the government, political parties, and the media. This model has been commonly associated with European countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, and the Nordic countries.

3. The polarised model of Northern Europe, which is characterized by strong competition between private media and a marked political polarization in content. The media tend to be linked to political parties and to adopt clear and defined political positions. This model has been commonly associated with northern European countries, such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

Hallin and Mancini (2011) acknowledged that their first book had a limited geographical focus and did not consider media systems outside the high GDP countries area (considering the Human Development Index). They expanded their analysis, although without the impact on the academic world of their previous work, to provide a more complete understanding of the global diversity of media systems, developing a new model in their new work, *Comparing Media Systems Beyond the Western World*; the main objective of the book is to analyze and compare media systems in different countries, focusing on three main models:

1. Polarized system: In this system, the media tend to be strongly linked to political parties or interest groups. The media can be used to promote specific political agendas, as illustrated in Italy and Venezuela.
2. Pluralistic system: In this system, there is a diversity of independent media, and media ownership is mainly private, with a high degree of press freedom. The US and the UK are mentioned as countries where these circumstances occur.
3. State or Authoritarian System: In this system, the state has significant control over the media, which may be state-owned or subject to strict government regulation. China and Russia are examples of highly controlled media systems, with significant censorship and limited press freedom.

Although the model proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) has been widely used and discussed in the field of political communication and media studies, it has also received some criticism, some of which has been acknowledged by the authors themselves (Hallin & Mancini, 2013), as it applies to (a) their link to 18 specific cases analyzed without extending the scope of the analysis beyond them, (b) their study as a starting point upon which other researchers could “build,” forward, and not simply “apply” it, and (c) their concern with those who believe that the model may be somewhat simplistic, but it underpins useful areas as a starting point for thinking about the similarities and differences in the development patterns of media systems.

Hallin and Mancini (2017) published a paper called “Ten Years After Comparing Media Systems: What Have We Learned,” in which they point out that comparative media analysis has advanced significantly, especially in the development of qualitative indicators of key concepts for this last decade. However, they still consider important elements that they intended to instill in the original study, in particular, better methodological pluralism and a theoretical reflection on the nature and development of systems and how the results of different quantitative studies could be gathered.

2.3. Research Gaps and Research Questions

This stated interest in Hallin and Mancini’s (2017) model and differing approaches in recent years spurs a need for a line of research and analysis based on bibliometrics, specifically for the scope of our case scenario in the field of politics and communications. In this article, we address this bottom-line groundwork and established research questions through a review of the literature, as follows:

RQ1: What is the current state of academic research related to the Hallin and Mancini model in the field of communication and politics?

RQ2: What are the patterns and trends identified in the 3,455 papers published on Hallin and Mancini's model in Web of Science?

RQ3: What are the least studied areas or underrepresented subtopics in research related to the Hallin and Mancini model?

RQ4: What are the strengths and limitations identified in existing research on the Hallin and Mancini model?

3. Methodology

One of the ways to obtain a plausible outcome from the research questions is to carry out a longitudinal study of scientific production in the field of research. From this point of view, bibliometrics is relevant because it allows us to track the evolution of research topics in such a way that we can understand how research priorities and approaches evolve over time. Similarly, by analyzing scientific output over a long period, one can assess the lasting impact of certain articles, authors, or institutions in the field. Additionally, bibliometrics can help identify key moments in a field's history, such as important discoveries, technological advances, or changes in research trends. Finally, a longitudinal bibliometric analysis aids academic institutions and researchers in strategically planning their future research and resources, identifying areas that have experienced rapid growth or may require more attention.

Bibliometrics is a discipline that is responsible for applying statistical methods to the study of the production, dissemination, and use of scientific information in a specific field of knowledge (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015). Its main objective is to measure and analyze various aspects of bibliographic production, such as the number of publications, citations received, collaborations between authors, and trends in different areas of knowledge. The two main bibliometric approaches are citation analysis and scientific mapping. The first approach focuses primarily on analyzing the citations received by different scientific documents, aiming to evaluate the influence, impact, and visibility of documents and authors in a given area of research. Scientific mapping is a methodology used to visualize and analyze structure, evolution, and interconnections within scientific research (Cobo et al., 2011). To understand the influence of Hallin and Mancini's work over time and the reviews and applications made in the last two decades, the bibliometric study aims to graphically represent how research areas, authors, scientific papers, and other entities within a particular field relate to each other.

To address this extensive area, the open-source software SciMAT, created by Cobo et al. (2011), synthesizes both procedures, analysis, and mapping. SciMAT combines bibliometrics and network analysis to visualize and analyze the structure and evolution of a scientific field over time. The latter technique aims to observe and break down a scientific field to understand its structure, trajectory, and main actors (Ramezani et al., 2014). SciMAT involves the construction of a matrix of keywords by documents and the creation of a co-occurrence matrix that reflects the internal connections and interlinking. This co-occurrence of links occurs when two keywords coexist in a paper, facilitating the identification of central topics in a field and reflecting their conceptual and cognitive dimensions (Cobo et al., 2011; Paule-Vianez et al., 2020). Then,

through dimensional reduction techniques and clustering algorithms (Cobo, 2012), two-dimensional scientific schemes originate. These schemes situate the themes considering their centrality (x-axis) and density (y-axis): centrality refers to the relative importance or influential position of a node (element) within a network (in the context of SciMAT, a node represents a field of research, an author, a scientific article, or an institution); and density refers to the measure of connection between nodes in a network (in the context of SciMAT, density indicates to what extent research fields are interconnected or how much collaboration exists between authors in a specific area).

Both indicators, taken together, provide a comprehensive view of the importance and cohesion of a topic (Cobo et al., 2014). These topics can be grouped according to: (a) leading themes or engines that are relevant and highly cohesive, located in the upper right quadrant (strong centrality and density)—they are well-developed and important in the scientific field; (b) specialized topics that are of marginal importance and are located in the upper left quadrant (low centrality, high density)—they are highly developed themes, although isolated from the rest; (c) emerging or disappearing themes that are located in the lower left quadrant (low centrality and density)—these topics are very little developed and scarcely related to the rest; and (d) basic or transversal themes that are topics very related to the rest but that are not sufficiently developed and are located on the lower right quadrant (high centrality and low density).

In short, SciMAT is a particularly valuable tool for decision-making, identifying opportunities for collaboration, and understanding the dynamics of scientific production.

3.1. Data Analysis

Web of Science is the source database for bibliometric analysis, which was selected because it is one of the repositories with the most important scientific journals in the areas of sciences, social sciences, and arts and humanities (Hörisch & Tenner, 2020). The Social Sciences Citation Index has a determined fund for Web of Science, containing literature reviews, minute books, and meeting summaries, and these were discarded; redundancies were eliminated for the analysis. The data, collected in August 2023, locates only articles published from 2004, the date of publication of the seminal book discussed earlier, using 2022 as the cutting year. Specifically, the search equation used was as follows: (ALL=("Hallin and Mancini") OR ALL=("media systems") OR ALL=("models of media and politics") OR ALL=("political communication*") OR ALL=("polarized pluralist model") OR ALL=("democratic corporatist model") OR ALL=("liberal model")) AND (DT=("ARTICLE" OR "EDITORIAL MATERIAL" OR "EARLY ACCESS" OR "REVIEW") AND PY=(2004-2022)).

4. Analysis and Discussion of the Results

In this section, the findings are presented in detail. The results in Table 1 show a total of 3,810 publications identified within the Web of Science database. In the study, we will refer exclusively to the 3,455 publications that are part of the Social Sciences Citation Index. The information obtained is classified into three periods of analysis for a longitudinal study. The first period covers 2004 to 2010; the second covers 2011 to 2019; and the third covers 2020 to 2022. Each of these periods is defined according to the literature reviewed. We decided to end the first of these periods in 2010, according to Cumming and Johan (2017) and Gurău and Dana (2020), who point out that the financial crisis of 2008 (which had its final effects in 2010) can be considered a relevant turning point in the analysis of the financial world with its

corresponding derivations in political issues and ultimately communication. For the second period, we have taken into consideration the Covid-19 outbreak, with its unequivocal impact on many aspects of society, including research. Finally, the study of the last three years will clearly delineate the most recent advances in the subject under analysis. Our study will lay out the illustrations and diagrams for presenting the strategic data and insight relevant to the timeline and several areas of knowledge; these clusters are grouped in a progression line as they evolved through time to define future and potential lines of research and for opening and creating opportunities. The evolution of the themes that make up the clusters observed for each period will determine additional cross-cutting themes and future lines of research and action.

Table 1. Web of Science Index.

Index	No. articles	%
Social Sciences Citation Index	3,455	91%
Arts and Humanities Citation Index	183	5%
Science Citation Index Expanded	120	3%
Conference Proceedings Citation Index–Social Science and Humanities	45	1%
Conference Proceedings Citation Index–Science	5	0%
Book Citation Index–Social Sciences and Humanities	2	0%
Total	3,810	100%

4.1. Analysis of the Performance of Scientific Production

According to Figure 1, the first period, which covers a total of seven years (37% of the total), accounts for 16% of the publications. In the last third of this period, there is an increasing trend in scientific production (37% of the total). The growing trend is consolidated in the second period analyzed, covering 47% of the analyzed years and bringing together 56% of the articles. In this case, the last third accounts for 49% of the studies, which shows an increase in recent years. The third period, which covers the last three years of the study (16% of the total), accounts for 29% of the publications. In this case, it can be seen that after reaching a maximum in 2020, the years 2021 and 2022 show a decrease in scientific production.

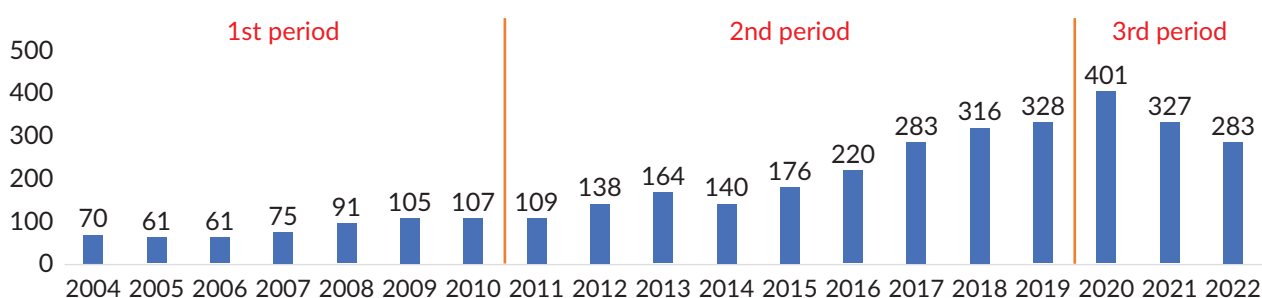


Figure 1. Yearly evolution of published articles.

Regarding the analysis of the authors' performance, Table 2 shows that Esser et al. (2012) from the University of Zurich, Switzerland, specializes in works on international and comparative media research, being the author with the highest scientific production. Jesper Strömbäck, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and Rens Vliegthart, Wageningen University & Research, the Netherlands, who specializes in

political communication, follow in the ranking of articles. As far as the ranking of citations is concerned, only the first of the mentioned authors appears in the top five, in fourth place. The first two positions go to James N. Druckman and Dennis Chong, Northwestern University, Illinois, US, specializing in political science. In third place, is a scholar from the University of Washington, Seattle, US, W. Lance Bennett (2013), who specializes in digital media, political communication, and social movement.

Table 2. Ranking of publications and authors.

Authors with the most articles			Authors with the most citations		
Authors	No. articles	No. citations	Authors	No. articles	No. citations
Frank Esser	26	1,567	James N. Druckman	10	2,329
Jesper Strömbäck	20	932	Dennis Chong	1	1,773
Rens Vliegenthart	20	696	W. Lance Bennett	8	1,614
Claes H. de Vreese	19	1,127	Frank Esser	26	1,567
Anders Olof Larsson	17	541	Shanto Iyengar	9	1,297
Tamir Sheafer	17	1,011			
Michael Hameleers	15	546			

A close look into journals and papers from proceedings reveals the topics focusing and investigation carrying up to five journals, representing the highest scientific production at 31% (Table 3). Political communication is the most relevant, encompassing 18% of the total. All journals are directly related to the field of communication and, in some cases, more specifically, to communication in the political field.

Table 3. Journals: Highest production.

Journal	No. articles	%	Year of volume 1
<i>Political Communication</i>	611	18	2004
<i>International Journal of Communication</i>	136	4	2009
<i>Profesional de la Información</i>	105	3	2016
<i>International Journal of Press-Politics</i>	105	3	2008
<i>European Journal of Communication</i>	101	3	2004

In Table 4, it can be seen that the most cited authors are Chong and Druckman (2007) with the article “Framing Theory”. This article refers to how the presentation and approach of information can influence the perception and understanding of a topic. It is a broad and general concept that applies to communication in various fields, such as politics, the media and society in general.

Apart from these five most cited articles, Table 5 appears with four additional articles, which are relevant as they are written by Hallin and Mancini themselves. However, there are none in which they collaborate. In this section of work from varied areas and disciplines, the analysis falls on what happened during the first ten years from when the original study, 2004, was published. It is noteworthy that the areas of application extend to a complex environment, i.e., two of them show their framing theory in connection to specific issues related to media coverage of immigration and swine flu. The remaining three articles are highlighted insofar as they revise and expand the original model, supporting the hypothesis that there is no single type of media system in Central and Eastern Europe, given the differences in press freedom, which eventually becomes a determining factor.

Table 4. Most cited articles.

Ranking	Journal	Title	Author	Year	Citations
1	<i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>	Framing Theory	Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman	2007	1,773
2	<i>Journal of Management Information Systems</i>	Emotions and Information Diffusion in Social Media-Sentiment of Microblogs and Sharing Behavior	Linh Dang-Xuan and Stefan Stieglitz	2013	800
3	<i>Communication Theory</i>	Political communication in media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research	Juergen Habermas	2006	773
4	<i>Journal of Communication</i>	A New Era of Minimal Effects? The Changing Foundations of Political Communication	W. Lance Bennett and Shanto Iyengar	2008	769
5	<i>Political Communication</i>	The Internet, public spheres, and political communication: Dispersion and deliberation	Peter Dahlgren	2005	761

Table 5. Most cited articles directly linked to the study.

Position	Journal	Title	Author	Year	Citations
31	<i>Journal of Communication</i>	Hallin and Mancini Revisited: Four Empirical Types of Western Media Systems	Michael Brüggemann, Sven Engesser, Florin Büchel, Edda Humprecht, and Laia Castro	2014	249
175	<i>Political Communication</i>	Ten Years After Comparing Media Systems: What Have We Learned?	Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini	2017	92
557	<i>International Journal of Communication</i>	Rethinking Hallin and Mancini Beyond the West: An Analysis of Media Systems in Central and Eastern Europe	Michael Brüggemann, Sven Engesser, Edda Humprecht, Laia Castro, and Florin Büchel	2017	37
640	<i>International Journal of Press/Politics</i>	From Liberal to Polarized Liberal? Contemporary U.S. News in Hallin and Mancini's Typology of News Systems	Efrat Nechushtai	2018	33
1,529	<i>International Journal of Communication</i>	Comparative Research, System Change, and the Complexity of Media Systems	Daniel C. Hallin	2020	11
1,616	<i>American Behavioral Scientist</i>	The Dynamics of Immigration Coverage in Comparative Perspective	Daniel C. Hallin	2015	10
1,645	<i>Journalism Studies</i>	The Partisans, the Technocrats and the Watchdogs: Domestication in Media Coverage of the Swine Flu Pandemic in 2009	Paolo Mancini, Alessio Cornia, Marina Ghersetti, and Tomas Odén	2016	10

4.2. Analysis of Scientific Maps

Once the performance of the scientific production has been analyzed, an analysis of the related thematic studies is carried out through the co-occurrence of keywords.

4.2.1. Period 2004–2010

The strategic diagram for the first period (Figure 2) shows the driving themes, those with high centrality and density, which correspond to “Citizens–Society” and “US Issues.” The third cluster is “Data–Technology,” an emerging (or disappearing) field of study, which shows little development and relationship with the rest. It is presented in the third quadrant with low centrality and density.

Our bibliometric study has revealed patterns and trends in communication systems consistent with the theories described by Hallin and Mancini in their 2004 landmark work for the period from 2004 to 2010. The main driving cluster (according to the number of articles published), “Citizens–Society,” is directly related to its concept of a “policy-mediated communication model,” which highlights the influence of the media on public perception and its relationship with civil society. The media aligns with its notion of the “Media System” and its importance in the coverage and representation of political issues. Communication strategies in electoral campaigns reflect their focus on “Political Communication” and how it affects democratic participation. In addition, academic research relates to this emphasis on the academic approach to communication systems. The psychological aspects of communication are related to the understanding of media effects and the psychology of information, which Hallin and Mancini also considered in their work. The digitization of information—“News (Internet)”—fits with his consideration of the “age of digitalization” and its impact on media and politics. In this context, the interaction between communication systems and the political realm aligns with Hallin and Mancini’s analysis of the relations between media and politics in different communication systems.

In addition to the “Citizens–Society” cluster, there is a less relevant driving topic in terms of the number of publications called “US Issues,” focused on specific issues related to the US during that time and which is directly related to the provided concept of “specific issues,” which highlights media attention focused on specific issues. This cluster is surrounded by several secondary clusters that add depth and context to our understanding of political and media communication in that period. “Policy” addresses media coverage of public policies and government decisions relating to Hallin and Mancini’s “sphere of politics.” The dimension “Political Parties” focuses on political groups and their influence on political communication, aligning with the concept of “political actors.” “Management” is another dimension that links government management and administration with the dimension of “structures of the political system.” The “Ethnic–Gender” dimension considers issues of ethnic and gender diversity in the political context, relating to the notion of “civil society” and the representation of diverse groups in the media. Finally, “Conflict” focuses on political conflicts and tensions, in line with Hallin and Mancini’s aspect of “political events,” which analyzes how the media covers significant political events.

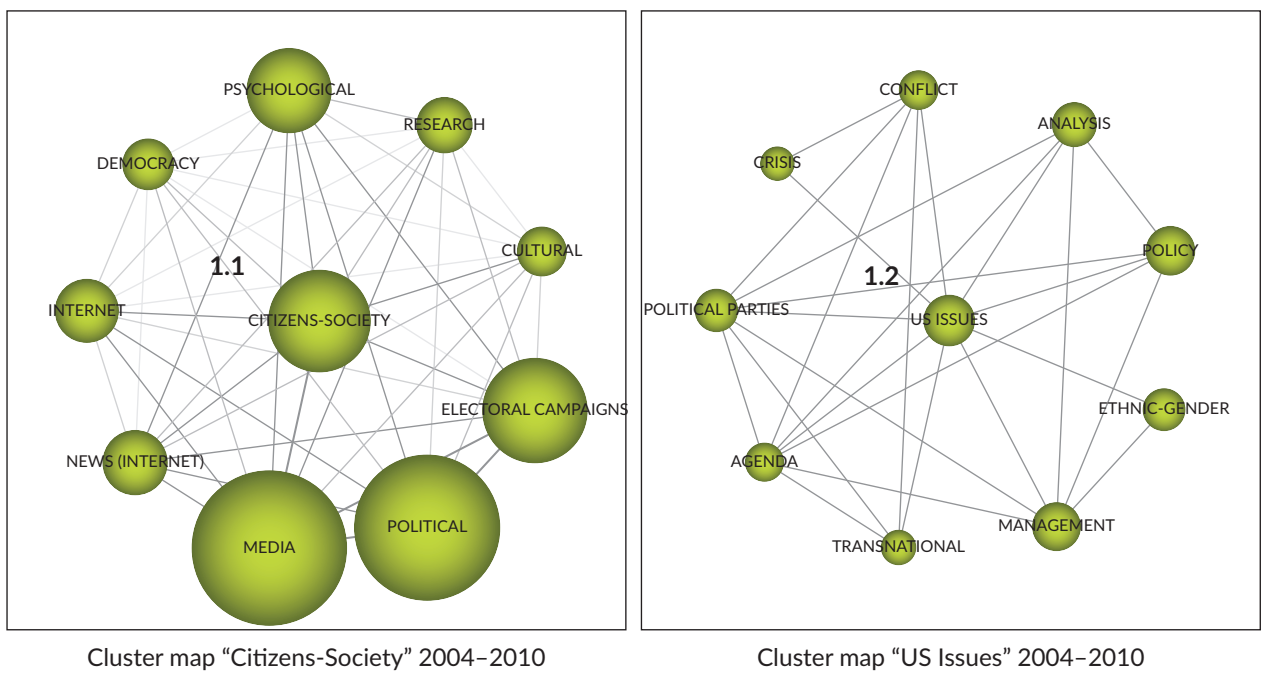


Figure 2. Strategic diagram for the period 2004-2010.

4.2.2. Period 2011-2019

For the second period, 2011-2019, three clusters are obtained, representing the following themes: "Political," "Policy," and "Ethnic-Gender." As can be seen in the strategic diagram of the second period (Figure 3), "Political" and "Policy" are driving themes. "Ethnic-Gender," the third cluster, is presented in the third quadrant with low centrality and density; therefore, it shows that this band is an emerging/disappearing field of study with little development and relationship to the rest.

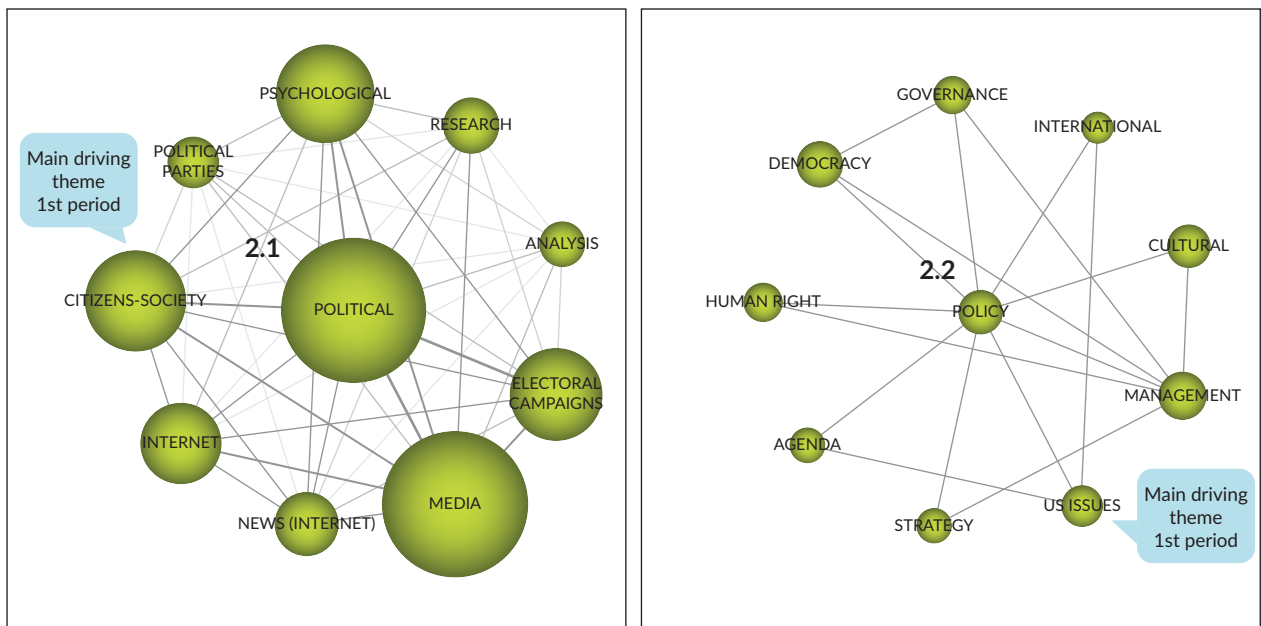
Figure 3 shows that the “Political” driving cluster becomes the main node, displacing “Citizens–Society,” the main node in the previous period, as a directly related secondary aspect. This seems to make sense, given that the 2008 crisis led to the development of exceptional economic measures and, consequently, increased political action to impose palliative measures. It is widely accepted that political action at times makes it difficult for the population to assimilate changing directions and intervention, which, in turn, creates additional input in efforts relative to “Media” communication from government agencies. Figure 3 identifies the second driving cluster, “Policy” (which shows lower density and centrality values than the previous one), including legal and regulatory aspects, strategy, governance, legitimacy, etc.

In the 2011 to 2019 timeframe, our bibliometric analysis has deepened the exploration of various countries’ communication systems, considering the period’s social, economic, and political circumstances. The main cluster identified, “Political,” stands as the epicenter of political communication. This approach aligns perfectly with Hallin and Mancini’s theory of the “politically mediated model of communication,” where the media plays a critical role in the relationship between politics and society. Around the main cluster, “Political,” we identified other clusters, such as “Media,” “Electoral Campaigns,” “Citizens–Society,” and “Psychological,” which relate directly to Hallin and Mancini’s key concepts. “Media” is a relevant tag due to the obvious importance of the media in political communication, as Hallin and Mancini emphasize in their media systems outlook. “Electoral Campaigns” ties into the notion of “political events,” examining how communication strategies influence political campaigns. “Citizens–Society” reflects the relationship between citizens and society in the context of communication systems, which is central to Hallin and Mancini’s understanding of civil society and in shaping public opinion. Finally, “Psychological” relates to the idea of the psychological effects of media communication, a key dimension in Hallin and Mancini’s analysis of how media influences public perception.

In addition to the previous cluster, there is also another less relevant driving topic called “Policy,” which focuses on the formulation and implementation of public policies and how communication systems influence this process. This approach connects directly to the “public policy” dimension analyzed by Hallin and Mancini, which examines media coverage of political issues and the influence of media on political agendas. Around the main cluster, “Policy,” we identified other secondary clusters that play a significant role in this context: “Democracy,” which focuses on democracy as a political concept and social process. In line with the theories of Hallin and Mancini, it examines how political and media communication impact the public perception of democracy and its functioning. “US Issues” reflects specific attention to US-related issues, connecting with Hallin and Mancini’s “specific issues” approach. It analyzes how political and media communication influences the perception of issues related to the US in a global context. “Management” concentrates on government management and administration, connecting with Hallin and Mancini’s dimension of “structures of the political system” and examining how the media reports on the management of government institutions. “Cultural” explores the cultural dimension of political communication, highlighting how cultural elements influence public perception and politics in general. Finally, “Governance” focuses on power and governance structures, connecting with Hallin and Mancini’s analysis of how the media covers political institutions and their functioning.



Strategic diagram period 2011-2019
Source: authors from software SciMAT



Cluster map "Political" 2011-2019
Source: authors from software SciMAT

Cluster map "Policy" 2011-2019
Source: authors from software SciMAT

Figure 3. Strategic diagram for the period 2011-2019.

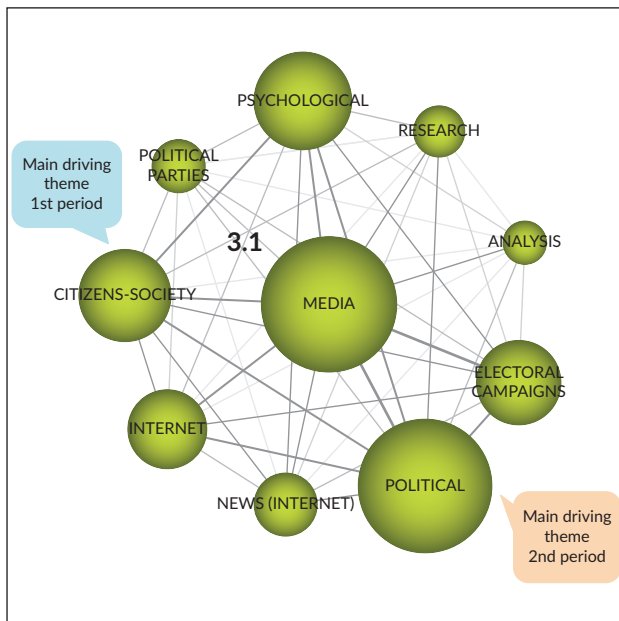
4.2.3. Period 2020-2023

In this third and last period, three clusters are obtained, which are observed in the strategic diagram (Figure 4), which represent the following themes: "Media" and "Policy" as driving themes and "Ethnic-Gender" as an emerging theme; this does not evolve with respect to the previous period.

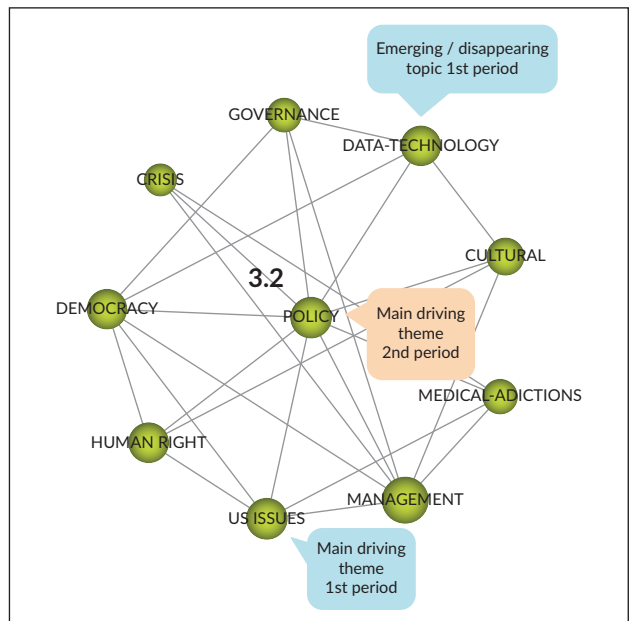
Figure 4 shows how the “Media” driving cluster occupies the central position, which in the first period was occupied by “Citizens–Society” and in the second, “Political.” In any case, the relationship between these three areas of research is close and is consolidated throughout the study. This predominant communicative action during the pandemic has been experienced worldwide, which may make sense. Figure 4 shows the map of the second “Policy” cluster, which renews its position from the previous period.



Strategic diagram period 2020–2022



Cluster map “Media” 2020–2022



Cluster map “Policy” 2020–2022

Figure 4. Strategic diagram for the period 2020–2022.

During the most recent period analyzed (2020–2022), the bibliometric analysis brings the focus to understanding patterns, trends, and variations in communication systems within a context marked by

exceptional social, economic, and political circumstances after the emergence of Covid-19 as a central factor. In this context, the main cluster “Media” stands out as a crucial element, in line with Hallin and Mancini’s theory of “policy-mediated communication.” Media continues to play a critical role in contemporary society, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, where information and disinformation have a significant impact on public perception and policy decisions. This reinforces the importance of media coverage in shaping public opinion, a concept central to Hallin and Mancini’s work. Likewise, secondary clusters such as “Political,” “Psychological,” “Citizens–Society,” and “Electoral Campaigns” are connected to the dimensions analyzed by Hallin and Mancini. While the “Political” tag includes political communication adapting to times of health crisis (aligning with Hallin and Mancini’s “political events”), the “Psychological” area extends to the emotional and psychological aspects of political communication, linking to the effects of media on public perception. Finally, two main anchors for Hallin & Mancini’s theory of civil society and public opinion encompass “Citizens–Society” and “Electoral campaigns.” These highlight “citizen participation” and “social mobilization”; in particular, “Electoral Campaigns” explores how political communication strategies influence election outcomes, side by side with the analysis of media systems and their impact on politics.

Around the “Policy” cluster, which, although it is a driving issue, has a lower relevance than “Media,” other secondary clusters have been identified as playing a significant role:

- “Management” focuses on government management and administration, and is related to the dimension of “structures of the political system” analyzed by Hallin and Mancini. It examines how the media reports on the management of government institutions and how this management influences public perception.
- “US Issues” reflects specific attention to US–related issues, connecting with Hallin and Mancini’s “specific issues” approach. It explores how political and media communication influences the perception of issues related to the US in a global context.
- “Governance” focuses on governance and governance structures, which connects with Hallin and Mancini’s analysis of how the media covers political institutions and their functioning.
- “Data–Technology” addresses the influence of technology and data on political communication and government decision-making, an increasingly relevant topic in the digital age.
- “Democracy” explores the perception and functioning of democracy in this period, in line with Hallin and Mancini’s approach to communication and democracy.

Figure 5 visualizes the longitudinal analysis of the three periods, considering the evolution of the main driving themes of each of them, their relationship with the relevant political and social circumstances, and their link with the work of Hallin and Mancini. During the first period (2004–2010), marked by the driving theme of “Citizens–Society,” communication systems focused on civil society and citizen participation. This happened at a time when information technologies and social media were beginning to impact political communication significantly. Civil society had become a driving force in public opinion, and the media, as prominent stakeholders, addressed issues related to society’s participation in political decision-making. Hallin and Mancini highlight the importance of civil society in their work, and this period reflects an increase in the visibility and influence of citizens in the public sphere.

In the second period (2011–2019), the main driving theme focus was the “Political” area, which coincided with a focus on political communication and the perception of democracy. Media coverage of political issues, the communication strategies of political leaders, and the relationship between media and politics are

central themes. This period was marked by significant political changes in many nations, including elections and social movements. Hallin and Mancini address political communication at the core of an increased attention to politics for its centrality in public relations.

In the third period (2020–2022), the main driving theme returns to “Media,” suggesting that, despite the evolution of topics and changing circumstances, the media remains a central factor in the formation of public opinion and quality democratic tools. The context of the Covid-19 pandemic brought awareness of the critical role played by timely and effective sharing of information; media is perceived as playing a critical role in disseminating reliable information and influencing the perception of government management to fight disinformation. This highlights the importance of media in the public eye, as demonstrated by Hallin and Mancini’s basic framework.

In summary, throughout these three periods, we have seen an evolution in the issues and circumstances that have shaped political communication, but also a continuity in the relevance of media and citizen participation. These findings are anchored in Hallin and Mancini’s theories on political communication and its influence on public opinion and democratic quality, highlighting the importance of adapting to ongoing political and technological changes.

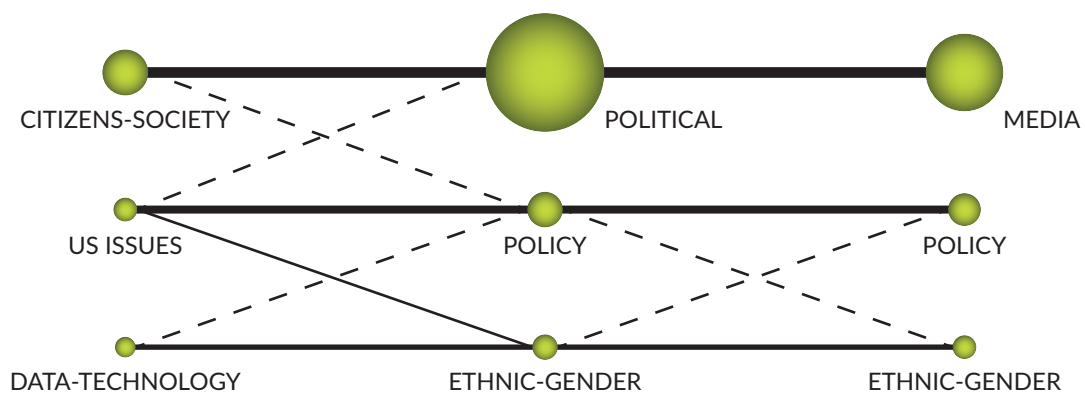


Figure 5. Longitudinal analysis themes and time periods.

5. Conclusions and Implications

Hallin and Mancini’s research focuses on the analysis of media systems and their relationship to politics and society. This work has provided valuable insights into how media systems influence political communication, public opinion, and democratic processes. The model has been widely used to analyze and compare media systems in different countries, contributing to the study of the interaction between media, politics, and society. In this context, the purpose of this research was to answer the questions posed in Section 2. Regarding RQ1, it is confirmed that Hallin and Mancini’s theories constitute a starting point that must be adapted to the current circumstances marked by social and media globalization and technological development across borders. Regarding RQ2, two general areas have been identified regarding the evolution of topics and highlighting areas of knowledge. In the first place, “Media” consolidates its primacy, although always related to aspects within the theme of “citizenship” and, more specifically, “Politics.” Less relevant in terms of the importance of scientific production but still being a common theme, we highlight “Politics,” which is focused on aspects of governance. Regarding RQ3, it is seen that the topic “Ethnic–Gender,”

although it has been less studied, is an emerging issue that has evolved over time. Finally, the main strength lies in the fact that the comparative analysis of media has advanced significantly in this last decade, from 2009, especially with regard to the development of qualitative indicators of key concepts. However, there are missing threads that represent a niche for action and policy implementation. This calls for a desirable progressive methodological pluralist approach and a more in-depth reflection on the nature and development of systems and the ways in which the results converge in different quantitative studies for gathering insight.

In summary, the work of Siebert et al. (1956) lays the foundation for understanding how the media conceptualizes its key tools for communications as part of different political systems. Although published earlier, Bernays's work (1928) still provides a fundamental understanding of the influence of the media and the manipulation of public opinion. This earlier focus on propaganda and persuasion techniques may be relevant to understanding how media is used to influence public opinion in the contexts described by Siebert et al. (1956). The work of Hallin and Mancini (2004) enriches previous theories by carrying out an exhaustive comparison of media systems in the Western world. In doing so, it expands on the perspective established by Siebert et al. (1956), as it includes illustrative case studies that exhibit how media systems operate in various cultural and political settings. This enriches the understanding of press theories in a global context and helps to apply these theoretical frameworks to real-world situations.

5.1. Limitations

Among the limitations that remain open to further inquisition, five areas of inquiry identify an open and vital ground.

First, from the perspective of qualitative analysis, the bibliometric approach tends to focus on quantitative data and may not capture the richness of Hallin and Mancini's qualitative contributions to theory and practice, which we exposed in Section 2. Next, a second consideration is related to language and geographical coverage. The choice of database and the languages are part of a search that follows an established path; this affects the scope of tangible and intangible variations and nuances in the results. Some of Hallin and Mancini's works may be written in less common languages or published in sources not indexed in certain databases.

Third, the emphasis on indexed publications presents a limitation to the focus on publications indexed in academic databases since this predominant ratio may exclude other types of work, such as technical reports, books, book chapters, and conference contributions, which may also be important in scholarly output. Following that, a fourth limitation arises from the interpretation of quotes because they do not always indicate positive support or agreement, which may put forward a context of critical criticism or deep discussions, a rich interpretation that simple quotations do not necessarily reflect. The fifth and final phase focuses on biases in the selection of sources, since depending on the database and the keywords used in the bibliometric search, there could be a bias in the selection of the sources included in the study.

5.2. Possible Future Lines of Research

Since 2011, Hallin and Mancini's new approach has been valuable in establishing a theoretical basis and structure for comparing media systems in different countries. However, it is important to recognize its

limitations, among which the globalization of the media and the inclusion of digital media should be highlighted. In this context, we propose two future lines of research. The first of these focuses on the growing influence of globalization on the media industry, understood as the process of interconnection and interdependence of cultures, the economy, and communication worldwide. The second focuses on the need to consider the influence of digital media, as they contribute to disinformation due to the lack of access to reliable sources of information, a negative element in terms of mediating public opinion and electoral processes with repercussions on a functioning society within a healthy democracy.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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